

The Partnership Working Award



Winner: Family Drug and Alcohol Court

The Family Drug and Alcohol Court in London is an example of genuine partnership work that is making a real difference to some of the most vulnerable children in the capital.

The court is a multi-agency, multi-disciplinary team made up of volunteers, administrators, drug treatment workers, social workers, doctors and judges. It is a joint venture between the Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust, children's charity Coram and the Inner London Family Proceedings Court in Wells Street.

Backed by five London boroughs, it works exclusively with families where parents have serious drug and alcohol problems, offering intensive support to give them the best chance of overcoming their problems.

The team includes volunteers with personal experience of overcoming substance misuse problems and works in partnership with lawyers, social workers, drug treatment services, housing and others in the five boroughs –

Camden, Hammersmith & Fulham, Islington, Southwark and Westminster. Working together means the whole process is faster, including initial assessments and access to treatment.

Crucially, an independent evaluation found that the Family Drug and Alcohol Court led to better outcomes for children including higher rates of children reunited with parents, and faster placements those unable to return home.

The research, by Brunel University, found parents got faster access to substance misuse services, received a wider range of services and were more successful at staying in treatment. It also found average cost savings of £4,000 a family in reduced foster care and about £1,800 in reduced court costs, with an estimated total saving to the public purse of about £40,000 a year for every family that recovered.

Our young judges rated the scheme highly. "These partnerships mean families are given the maximum possible support," said one.

Criteria:

For the outstanding multi-agency project or team that has made the most demonstrable improvement to people's lives. This applies not only to partnership working between statutory and public sector agencies but also partnerships involving organisations in the voluntary and private sectors.

Also shortlisted:

- Autism Alert Programme, Hampshire Autistic Society
- Chance to Shine, Cricket Foundation
- Saving Londoners' Lives, Saving Londoners' Lives
- Schools Partnership, LUSU involve